

HOPKINSVILLE KENTUCKIAN

HOPKINSVILLE, KY., SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1909

STORY OF TOBACCO GROWERS' FIGHT BY HON. A. O. STANLEY AT CHAUTAUQUA



HON. A. O. STANLEY.

and done more for his constituency than any congressman the district has ever had. I look over this audience now and see in it well-groomed farmers in tailor suits and this reminds me of the condition that existed a few years ago when the farmer got nothing for his labor and when the tobacco growers were especially oppressed. I say great credit is due to Mr. Stanley for the great and loyal aid he has lent in bringing about this great change. He has not received all his rewards yet but he will in the future.

"I am not always a supporter of Democratic nominees. I always try to think before voting and this is, probably, why I was asked to introduce Mr. Stanley. I believe in standing by the friends of the agricultural interests of our country and I recognize Mr. Stanley as one of these friends and now take great pleasure in presenting him to you."

Given an Attentive Hearing
When Mr. Stanley stepped to the front of the platform he was greeted with a storm of applause. As he told of the brave fight made by the tobacco growers of Kentucky and Tennessee he held his hearers spellbound. During his discussion of rectified whisky his convincing arguments abounded in keen humor and satire. His close and the tributes he paid to the memory of distinguished Kentuckians, were probably the most eloquent ever delivered on the chautauqua platform. This statement is made despite the fact that William Jennings Bryan, Senator Dolliver, Senator Tillman, Congressman Champ Clark and Gen. John B. Gordon have addressed audiences from the same platform.

When Mr. Stanley finished his address his hearers, who had been entranced by his eloquence and logic, made their way to the platform to congratulate him. It was several minutes before he was able to get in his carriage and return to the hotel.

Mr. Stanley's Address.
Mr. Stanley spoke as follows:
It is with a sense of unalloyed pleasure and pride that I have accepted the kind and cordial invitation of the excellent manager of this chautauqua to address you today, and my gratification is the more profound since I have been assured by him that his invitation was inspired by the many requests of the tobacco growers of Daviess and adjoining counties, that I should appear upon the program of this day, dedicated as it is to the welfare and to the happiness of the farmer.

I can readily understand the keen interest which you all must feel in a measure which touches so vitally the happiness and the prosperity of every planter within the sound of my voice. For twenty years and more you have appealed, and appealed in vain, against the imposition of this unjust and indefensible tax, and it is but natural that we should felicitate ourselves at this time upon the partial removal of this onerous burden.

The First Tobacco Meeting.
Shortly after my election to the

the Hon. John Wesley Gaines, who had just received a letter requesting our presence at a farmers' meeting at Guthrie, Ky. The purpose of this meeting was the devising of ways and means to meet the then intolerable oppression of the trust and to memorialize congress for the repeal of the six cent tax upon tobacco in the natural leaf. Mr. Gaines was then serving his fifth term in congress, and his important committee assignments and the many other official duties prevented his leaving Washington at that time. I was laboring under no such handicap. It was my first term in congress, and, like all new members, I was assigned to a committee which met in a little tomb down in the Terrace of the capitol about once every three months for the purpose of distributing stationery and discussing the weather. You know that it is an unwritten law that a new congressman should act like good little boy. He must be seen and not heard, and it matters not what his talents may be, for the first term or two he is certain to have plenty of spare time for study and reflection. Private John Allen, of Mississippi, used to say, that in Washington they hitched horses to new congressmen.

I was anxious to be of service to my constituents, and I had heard something of the hard fate of the tobacco grower. I accepted the invitation and traveled nearly a thousand miles to meet this little band of heroes. I shall never forget that meeting. It was unlike any other assembly of the kind which I have ever beheld. Two or three hundred men assembled in that little opera house—haggard, desperate and determined. Many of them were poorly clad, deep engraven upon every face was the expression of pain and grim resolve. They were tobacco growers where tobacco was the prime or principle means of subsistence. The land in that section, while not so well adapted to the raising of wheat or corn as the alluvial soil of Daviess, Henderson and Union, produces an Austrian leaf, which for generations has sold at from six to twenty cents a pound. In 1903 they had seen its value arbitrarily reduced to three or four cents and the country divided up into districts, with a single buyer to each district and competition absolutely eliminated or destroyed. Unless something could be done to relieve this woeful condition of affairs it meant the utter ruin of the whole section. It meant to the land owner that his profits were gone and his property confiscated; it meant to the tenant that sooner or later he would be beggared, hungry and penniless, he must start down the dusty road, with a wife and babes at his heels and in tatters, an exile and a vagabond, and yet there was not a coward in that assembly. They met the crisis as brave Kentuckians and Tennesseans are wont to face disaster—without fear and without flinching. There was not a man who said you could not organize the farmer, there was not a man in all that assembly, who bowed beneath his burden, surrendered to idle repining or despair.

An Appeal to Congress.
They commissioned me as the bearer of an eloquent appeal to the federal congress, urging the repeal of this onerous tax. All day long those determined men discussed this calamity that had befallen them and ways and means of meeting this menace to their happiness and to their homes. In that audience were the men who afterwards organized the

gle commodity and a single industry in the history of the world, for at that time the tobacco growers of Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia were absolutely unorganized, each man protecting himself as best he could, the trust plundering them all alike. Along in the evening it was my pleasure to address this assembly. I assured them that I would devote every energy and what talent God had given me towards securing the repeal of this tax of which they so bitterly complained. In addition to that, I advised them to convert themselves into a compact and corporate organization, with powers to contract and be contracted with, and that they place in the barn or crumbled into dust every pound of tobacco in the Black patch, and to hold it until it rotted in the barn or crumbled into dust and was blown back into the fields where it was grown before they should sell it at three cents a pound to the American Tobacco company, or the Regies of Europe.

Was Deeply Impressed
I returned to Washington deeply impressed with the destitution of my people and firmly convinced that it was due entirely to the greed and lawless exactions of the tobacco trust. After a long and searching investigation I discovered that the American Tobacco company was in practical control of the entire manufacture of chewing and smoking tobacco and of snuff, and that they had entered into a combination with the Imperial Tobacco company of Great Britain, and with the government monopolies known as the Regies in Spain, Portugal, Austria and Italy, and that they had bankrupted the tobacco brokers of Hopkinsville and Clarksville, who had formerly sold this type of tobacco in the open market of Bremen from whence it was distributed to Switzerland, Norway and Sweden. In other words, that they controlled every avenue or channel of trade through which the dark or Pryor tobacco had formerly reached the market. I found that these governments were making inordinate profits on this tobacco, that Great Britain, Portugal, Austria, Spain and Italy were deriving a revenue from tobacco alone of over two hundred and fifty millions of dollars and that in the year 1902-3 they had paid for this same tobacco, upon which they reaped this enormous sum, the pitiful sum of seventeen millions of dollars. It was manifest to me that if the farmers could succeed in holding their tobacco they would necessarily deprive these governments of this tremendous source of revenue, and effort to secure it by direct taxation would have precipitated riots in the streets of Paris and of Madrid and of Rome. A few months afterward I returned to Guthrie. The little band who had met in the opera house had now multiplied until five thousand determined men were assembled at the fair grounds at that place. The Planters' Protective association had been organized and incorporated in the meantime, and every man in that vast assembly pledged his holdings to this organization. How they held that tobacco for three long years, how they sold forty thousand hogsheads at one time to the Italian Regies at their own price, how kindred and like associations were formed in the Stemming district and in the Green River district, in the Burley country. In Virginia and in Maryland is an old story to you all. You know all that they endured and all that they accomplished.

Refused Remuneration
I remember that when I took my departure after the first meeting at Guthrie those planters met me and, notwithstanding their dire distress, they insisted that I should be remunerated for my long journey, or, at least, that I should accept the sum actually expended in journeying to and from Washington. This I refused, but I told them that I knew they would do as much for their people as I had done and I wanted them to do the same thing—to send a delegation to the city of Washington, composed of the most experienced and conservative farmers, and of dealers in leaf tobacco both in this country and in Europe, who from long personal experience thoroughly understood the condition of the trade, and the oppression of the people and the necessity for the repeal of the six cents tax upon unmanufactured tobacco. In the meantime, I introduced several bills in the house providing for the repeal of this tax. After much pleading, Mr. Gaines and myself at last secured a hearing before the ways and means committee on that important measure. Upon notice Felix G. Ewing, general manager of the Planters' Protective association; Charles H. Fort, its president; Joel Fort, C. E. Barker, John Allen, W. P. Warfield, R. C. Cooper, E. M. Flack and others came as they had agreed to do to the city of Washington immediately upon receiving notice from me that their presence was needed. These men, thoroughly acquainted with every detail of the trade and with the lamentable conditions which then existed, pleaded for weeks with eloquence and invincible logic before that committee. At last they favorably reported the bill which I had introduced for the repeal of the tax upon tobacco in the natural leaf.

finance committee, Mr. Aldrich, to whom this bill was referred, could never find a favorable time to consider this measure, although it had passed the house without a dissenting vote. I was convinced that I would sooner or later discover the fine Italian hand of the American Tobacco company in this fixed opposition to my bill on the part of the chairman of the finance committee. At last I found that Mr. Duke, himself, was operating a ground wire between 111 Fifth avenue, New York, the offices of the American Tobacco company, and the room of the committee on finance in the senate. The protest against the passage of this measure was not made, however, by the American Tobacco company in the open. The trust claimed that it would injure the independents about whom Mr. Duke suddenly became exceedingly solicitous. I found a Mr. Martin, of the firm of Martin & Co., which was then secretly owned by the American Tobacco company, who made a sworn statement that at Mr. Duke's instance he had wired the chairman of the finance committee to kill the bill for the repeal of the tax upon leaf tobacco because all the independent manufacturers were opposed to it. He stated further that this telegram was sent, not at the instance of the independents, but at the dictation of the president of the trust. During three consecutive congresses I saw this same bill pass the house of representatives without a dissenting voice and I saw it find its tomb in the pigeon holes of the desk of the chairman of the finance committee.

There is a peculiar custom called "senatorial courtesy" which prevails in that body, and the rules governing it are as binding and inexorable as the laws of the Medes and Persians and it was impossible to prevail upon any senator to move to discharge that committee from further consideration of that bill and to take it up in the open in the senate, because that would have been regarded as a breach of this same "senatorial courtesy."

The One Chance Left
There was left one chance, and only one, for the passage of this measure. If I could incorporate in a tariff bill an amendment providing for the repeal of this tax, the matter could be threshed out in the open senate, for although the chairman of the finance committee might strike it out when the measure was up on its final passage, any senator was privileged in his own right to offer an amendment reinserting any provision in the original bill which had been eliminated by the committee to which it had been referred.

When the Payne bill was reported to the house, I immediately offered an amendment providing for the repeal of this tax, and to my surprise I found that Mr. Payne, chairman of the committee on ways and means, was unalterably opposed to this amendment. He assured me that if I would offer the bill as a separate measure that the would not object to its favorable report by his committee, that he was unwilling to permit any amendment to the Payne bill which in any way affected the collection of internal revenue. In other words, he was willing to have the bill introduced and passed in the house in a way in which he knew it would be forever entombed in the senate, but he was not willing to have it pass in a way which would permit a vote upon it in the open and a discussion of it upon its merits. Other members of the ways and means committee were equally obdurate and chances for the passage of the bill were as dark as ever. I determined, however, to die in the last ditch and to fight for the repeal of this tax as long as there was life or the most remote possibility of success. When the chairman or any other member of the ways and means committee arose to address the house I immediately interrupted him to demand that this bill be incorporated in the tariff measure as an amendment to the administrative part of the bill to which it was germane. One after another they dismissed me with the same flimsy excuse. No man, however, ventured to attack the justice of this amendment or to defend the imposition of the tax until Mr. Calderhead, of Kansas, arose to discuss the tariff bill on the last day and the last hour of debate. He was under the impression that this six cents tax was an import duty; in other words, he knew nothing about it. At the conclusion of his remarks I secured fifteen minutes from the chairman of the committee in which to answer the argument of Mr. Calderhead. I explained in that limited time as best I could the nature of this measure, reviewed the casions upon which it had passed the house of representatives without a dissenting vote, and exposed the manifest inequity by which it had been bottled and smothered to death in the senate.

Defied the Committee
I defied those members of the ways and means committee who knew the history of this legislation to defend the imposition of this tax, or to give any reason for its continuance except that it was demanded by the trust. I demanded that it

and patriotic man, and who had been misinformed as to the nature of this measure, came to me and said that he was anxious to know the truth about this legislation and that if I could convince him of the truth of the assertions which I had so boldly made upon the floor of the house that he himself would offer my amendment on the floor of the house, for under the rules which governed the passage of the bill, no man except a member of the committee could offer an amendment at that time. From 8 o'clock that evening until midnight I reviewed this measure with him. Told him of the story of the oppression of the people of Kentucky and Tennessee, and exposed the nefarious practices by which relief had been denied to a brave and patriotic people. When he left he carried with him an amendment to the Payne bill providing for the repeal of this tax. Mr. Calderhead had hardly left my desk on the floor of the house of representatives before I was approached by Mr. McCall, of Massachusetts, also a member of the ways and means committee. There is in the national assembly no more gifted, courageous and able representative than Samuel McCall. This method of perpetuating an inquiry which you dare not defend did not meet his approval. Time was precious, and McCall agreed to give me an hour immediately after the adjournment of the house. I made good use of that hour, and at the end of the time Samuel McCall had agreed to vote that my amendment should be incorporated in the Payne bill. All the Democrats upon the sub-committee of the ways and means committee, to whom this matter was to be referred, were with us and with McCall and Calderhead we had votes enough to insure the offering of this amendment on the following day, but the chairman of the finance committee is resourceful as well as stubborn and determined. Mine was the last amendment offered to the bill. The vote was to be taken under the rule promptly at 3 o'clock on the following day.

Spectacular Fight
If Payne could kill time and so manipulate other amendments which he favored in such a way that the hour of 3 o'clock would arrive before my amendment was reached, it was doomed. I have never seen a more spectacular fight, certainly none in which I was more deeply concerned. Payne and his allies fighting against the reaching of this amendment before the fatal hour. Ollie James, Ben Johnson, Byrns of Tennessee and a half dozen others fighting tooth and nail to rush things through in order that this bill might have a chance for its life. You may realize how nearly successful the wily chairman of the ways and means committee was when I tell you that this amendment was passed at 2 o'clock fifty-nine minutes and forty seconds. Twenty seconds more and the American Tobacco company would have heaved a sigh of relief and the tobacco planters of Kentucky and Tennessee would for years to come have struggled on under this onerous and indefensible burden.

The trust was by no means deterred by this first defeat and stubbornly renewed the battle in the senate. I do not mean to inject politics into this question. It does, however, afford me the most profound gratification to say, that from the beginning every Democratic member of the house of representatives and every Democratic member of the ways and means committee have heartily and unequivocally favored the repeal of this tax. When the Payne bill was reported to the senate and referred to the committee on finance, Senator Aldrich immediately struck out this amendment, and then it was that our senators Paynter and Bradley promptly demanded its restoration. Senator Paynter brought the matter before the conference of the Democratic senators and there was not a dissenting voice. Senator Bradley went to work on the Republicans, and it was my pleasure and privilege to render him every possible assistance. I can not too highly commend the action of Senator Bradley and the Republican insurgents. These insurgent senators may be correctly described as patriots who love their country better than their party, and who fear God more than they do Aldrich. In a short time every insurgent senator was heartily and unequivocally in favor of this bill, undeterred by the known and bitter opposition of the senator from Rhode Island. Then commenced the missionary work among the so-called regulars on the Republican side. Slowly, gradually and with infinite missionary work and multiplied appeals we were able to secure enough favorable votes to successfully resist the hitherto invincible opposition of the chairman of the financial committee.

Attempted Trickery
When he found that he could not defeat this bill by open opposition, he attempted to emasculate it by trickery and chicanery, he professed the most serious fears that it would interfere with the collection of the internal revenue, that the commissioner had great doubts of its advisability, that it was absolutely essential that certain restrictions and

government. The fact that had been sold in the natural that no tobacco grower had been guilty of any such offense not in any degree appease the fears of the American company and of Senator Aldrich to say that it was not in order to pass this amendment submit to many onerous and restrictions, but I cheerfully ator Bradley the credit to say resisted the cunning and the tion of the senator from Rhode and with stubborn determ and that he got all that he and I am firmly con that he secured enough render this amendment of mable value to the farmers of tucky and Tennessee. Cou amendment, however, have pa the form in which it left the giving the farmer and the dealer the right to sell leaf unimpaired and untrammelled would, as Joel Hart has already told, have been selling within years not less than fifty million pounds of tobacco unmanufactured and passing directly from the ers to the consumers without interference and the control American Tobacco company, other manufacturer in any whatsoever.

The Natural Leaf Trade
There is nothing that the fears so much as the building trade in tobacco in the natural because to the extent that it established it not only destroyed power of the trust to plunder farmer but it destroys his power control in any way whatever. absolutely eliminated from the of the industry. There is no more certain than that no combination can control any modify so long as it passes directly from the agriculturist who produces to the consumer who consumes for the simple reason that both producers and consumers are too numerous and too scattered to effective combinations probable. We have no corn trust, wheat trust, or hay trust for simple reason that corn and hay, when they leave the er are ready then and there for consumer, and it is impossible any trust to come between the and the buyer. You have a trust, a sugar trust and a tobacco trust, and these trusts all owe existence to the same condition. When sugar cane and the sugar leave the hands of the producer are not ready for consumption but must go through the refineries of Havana and others; when iron is taken from the earth it must pass through the smelters and the roller mills the costly manufacturing plant the steel trust before it can reach the market in the form of beams and girders, and wire nails; when the tobacco leaves farmer prior to the repeal of tax no man can sell it without coming a manufacturer, and forces every leaf of it to costly plants of the American Tobacco company, whether it reaches the market in the form of smoked tobacco, chewing tobacco, snuff, cigars. The trust is essentially manufacturer of tobacco. It not own the land and it does not raise the tobacco, and if the farmer can sell his leaf in the natural state and unmanufactured and consumer can utilize it in that form it reaches the consumer directly the American Tobacco company, its allies never have an opportunity to lay their plilfering fingers on. For that season the profits, wherever they are, must necessarily be distributed between the producer and the consumer according to automatic law of supply and demand.

Driven To Last Extremity
Driven to the last extremity, opponents of this measure have tempted to convince the farmer that he really never wanted this tax moved, that this restriction was good thing and he did not know and that he will derive no benefit from it whatever, that he will be injured. They seem to think that too much liberty is a danger thing for a farmer anyway. I hate to answer this silly objection to this measure, because I assume that the tobacco growers of this country knew what they wanted before they asked for it. In 1888 the protest against this unjust restriction upon the sale of leaf tobacco was so strong that the Republican platform of that year denounced it and promised repeal it, and in 1890 the farmers thought that it had been repealed. A provision was inserted in the McKinley law intended for that purpose and it did grant a measure of relief. Over a hundred and fifty thousand tobacco growers, either in person, through their authorized representatives, have protested against this unjust legislation, and yet in the teeth of all that a delegation, what purported to be farmers and independent manufacturers actually called Senator Bradley out into the lobby of the senate and told him with straight faces that the farmers did not want this tax repealed, that it was a scheme of A. O. Stanley to make himself popular. I will quote Senator Bradley's exact language to that delegation. It is

and who had been misinformed as to the nature of this measure, came to me and said that he was anxious to know the truth about this legislation and that if I could convince him of the truth of the assertions which I had so boldly made upon the floor of the house that he himself would offer my amendment on the floor of the house, for under the rules which governed the passage of the bill, no man except a member of the committee could offer an amendment at that time. From 8 o'clock that evening until midnight I reviewed this measure with him. Told him of the story of the oppression of the people of Kentucky and Tennessee, and exposed the nefarious practices by which relief had been denied to a brave and patriotic people. When he left he carried with him an amendment to the Payne bill providing for the repeal of this tax. Mr. Calderhead had hardly left my desk on the floor of the house of representatives before I was approached by Mr. McCall, of Massachusetts, also a member of the ways and means committee. There is in the national assembly no more gifted, courageous and able representative than Samuel McCall. This method of perpetuating an inquiry which you dare not defend did not meet his approval. Time was precious, and McCall agreed to give me an hour immediately after the adjournment of the house. I made good use of that hour, and at the end of the time Samuel McCall had agreed to vote that my amendment should be incorporated in the Payne bill. All the Democrats upon the sub-committee of the ways and means committee, to whom this matter was to be referred, were with us and with McCall and Calderhead we had votes enough to insure the offering of this amendment on the following day, but the chairman of the finance committee is resourceful as well as stubborn and determined. Mine was the last amendment offered to the bill. The vote was to be taken under the rule promptly at 3 o'clock on the following day.

Attempted Trickery
When he found that he could not defeat this bill by open opposition, he attempted to emasculate it by trickery and chicanery, he professed the most serious fears that it would interfere with the collection of the internal revenue, that the commissioner had great doubts of its advisability, that it was absolutely essential that certain restrictions and